

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, BL

SUBJ: AMERICAN PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA

1. AT THE INVITATION OF THE MINISTER OF PLANNING, GENERAL JUAN LECHIN, I CALLED ON HIM MARCH 10 FOR A REVIEW OF HIS TRIP TO WASHINGTON. AMONG THE ITEMS HE WISHED TO TOUCH ON WAS THE SITUATION OF THE AMERICAN PRISONERS. HE REPEATED WHAT HE HAD

TOLD ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS THAT THE BOLIVIAN AUTHORITIES WERE MOVING TOWARD AN ACCELERATION OF THE JUDICIAL PROCESS AND EXPECTED TO HAVE SEVERAL CASES RESOLVED WITHIN A FEW WEEKS. I TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TELL GENERAL LECHIN THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT EXPECTED MORE AND FASTER ATTENTION TO THOSE AMERICAN PRISONERS WHO WERE BEING DETAINED ON DOUBTFUL EVIDENCE, WHO ARE DEMONSTRABLY IN NEED OF MEDICAL OR PSYCHIATRIC CARE, OR WHOSE LIKELY DETENTION WAS REASONABLE TO ANY SENTENCE. I TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT SEVERAL CASES BE BROUGHT TO A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION WITHIN A MATTER OF DAYS. GENERAL LECHIN VISIBLY PERKED UP AT THIS STATEMENT OF MINE AND TOOK NOTES ABOUT OUR CONVERSATION. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY DISCUSS THIS WITH THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND INTENDED TO RAISE THE DESIRED SOLUTION IN FRONT OF PRESIDENT

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BANZER AT THE CABINET MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 11.

2. ALSO ON MARCH 10 AND ALSO AT HIS INVITATION I CALLED ON THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, CARLOS CALVO, TO DISCUSS THE U.S. PRISONERS' PROBLEM. MINISTER CALVO SAID THAT HE HAD RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR REQUESTING ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR GUARDS TO ACCOMPANY PRISONERS TO HEAR-

INGS AND HAD BECOME CURIOUS AS TO THE SITUATION OF THE PRISONERS. HE SAID HE HAD ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE U.S. HAD IMPOSED A HARSH BOLIVIAN NARCOTICS LAW ON THE GOB AND THAT THOSE BEING DETAINED WERE CONSIDERED AS GUILTY. I REVIEWED THE US-BOLIVIAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NARCOTICS FIELD FROM THE TIME OF THE VISIT IN 1973 OF A U.S. ATTORNEY TO THE PRESENT. AS A RESULT OF MY ORIENTATION THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE FEELS THAT HE MUST BE MORE ACTIVE IN THIS AREA, HELPING WITH THE PROMPT RESOLUTION OF KEY CASES, HELPING THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO ACCELERATE CASES BY RAISING THE SUBJECT IN THE CABINET MEETING OF MARCH 11. HE SAID HE FELT THAT THE MINISTRY SHOULD BE FORTHCOMING WITH MORE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP IMPROVE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM. HE SAID THROUGH HIS OWN PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE MATTERS IN THE BOLIVIAN COURTS WERE HANDLED POORLY AND WITH GREAT DELAY. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE SHOULD GET BEHIND THE CONSTRUCTION FOR BETTER PRISON FACILITIES WHICH HE CONSIDERED APPALING.

3. I AM ENCOURAGED THAT TWO CABINET MINISTERS HAVE JOINED THE RANKS OF THOSE WHO WISH TO IMPROVE THE MANNER BY WHICH BOLIVIAN JUSTICE PROCEEDS. I HOPE THAT THEY DO CARRY OUT THEIR STATEMENTS TO RAISE THE SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN THE CABINET MEETING AND THAT THEIR EFFORTS WILL HELP IN OUR WORK SEEKING A PROMPT RESOLUTION OF THE U.S. PRISONERS' CASES.

STEDMAN

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